



## Iron Sources

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/uspdi/202305.html>

### Importance of diet

For good health, it is important that you eat a balanced and varied diet. If you think that you are not getting enough iron in your diet or you become anemic, you should take an iron supplement. Iron is found in the diet in two forms—heme iron, which is well absorbed, and nonheme iron, which is poorly absorbed. The best dietary source of absorbable (heme) iron is lean red meat. Chicken, turkey, and fish are also sources of iron, but they contain less than red meat. Cereals, beans, and some vegetables contain poorly absorbed (nonheme) iron. Foods rich in vitamin C (e.g., citrus fruits and fresh vegetables), eaten with small amounts of heme iron-containing foods, such as meat, may increase the amount of nonheme iron absorbed from cereals, beans, and other vegetables. Some foods (e.g., milk, eggs, spinach, fiber-containing, coffee, tea) may decrease the amount of nonheme iron absorbed from foods. Additional iron may be added to food from cooking in iron pots.

To prevent deficiency, adult pregnant women should ingest 30 mg iron per day. Breast-feeding women should ingest 15 mg per day. To treat a deficiency, take the amount prescribed by your physician or on the manufacturer's package directions. Iron is best absorbed when taken on an empty stomach, with water or fruit juice about 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals. However, to lessen the possibility of stomach upset, iron may be taken with food or immediately after meals. Do not take iron supplements and antacids or calcium supplements at the same time.

### Iron deficiency anemia

Iron is a mineral that the body needs to produce red blood cells. When the body does not get enough iron, it cannot produce the number of normal red blood cells needed to keep you in good health. This condition is called iron deficiency (iron shortage) or iron deficiency anemia. Although many people in the U.S. get enough iron from their diet, some must take additional amounts of iron to meet their needs. Lack of iron may lead to unusual tiredness, shortness of breath, a decrease in physical performance, and learning problems in children and adults, and may increase your chance of getting an infection.

### Foods high in iron content:

#### Proteins:

BEANS  
BEEF, LEAN  
CLAMS  
EGGS  
FISH  
LENTILS  
LIVER (WURST)  
MEATS  
PEANUT BUTTER  
SOYBEANS

#### Grains:

FORTIFIED CEREALS  
DARK BREADS  
HOT CEREAL  
OATMEAL  
CREAM OF WHEAT  
RICE (ENRICHED)  
NOODLES (FORTIFIED)

#### Fruits and vegetables:

APRICOTS, DRY  
MOLASSES  
POTATOES (WITH SKIN)  
RAISINS  
DARK LEAFY GREENS:  
SPINACH, CHARD, PARSLEY  
STRAWBERRIES

## Percentage and amount of iron in some commonly used iron compounds

Preparation	Iron compound (mg) per tablet	Percent (%) of iron	Elemental Iron (mg) per tablet
Ferrous fumarate	200	33	66 *best absorption
Ferrous gluconate	300	12	36
Ferrous sulfate	300	20	60 *least expensive

### Supplements:

Ferrous sulfate is the least expensive iron with the most side effects. Many people complain of constipation while on iron supplementation. Of each 300 mg tablet of ferrous sulfate, only 60 mg of iron is available for absorption. Ferrous gluconate contains only 36 mg of iron so it is less likely to cause stomach upset. The best iron is ferrous fumarate which contains 66 mg of iron per 200 mg tablet with the most bio-available iron for absorption. Ferrous Fumarate is more expensive but is milder in terms of side effects.